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ABSTRACT

This paper is a brief account and argument for using Built Environment Education Workshops (BEEWs) as a data collection method. The research is based on women of African descent and the connections among their social practices, the spaces that generate them and are generated by them, and the language they use to mediate and/or negotiate those spaces. Feminist popular education models and other relevant feminist perspectives are used to design the BEEWs. The paper notes that the research process and product are "real" and "imagined" effects of chaos theory. Chaos theory has been and will continue to be used as both metaphor and process to capture the dynamic amorphous layered reality of the city's postmodern, geohistoric condition, the "place" of women of African descent within it, the role that building industry professionals play in defining the spaces in which these women live, the empowering possibilities of utilizing popular education to enable critical understanding of spatial politics, the varied critical theoretical frameworks used to illuminate and define the phenomenon, the foregrounding of a peculiar standpoint within this research agenda, the methods used to develop this standpoint and to gather research data, and lastly, the actual way that the final dissertation research results will be presented. The paper uses June Jordan's poetry to move the reader through the academic discourse. This use of both creative writing and academic discourse is an example of the layering effects of chaos theory, in which similar themes can be read in both texts. (Contains 14 notes and 48 references. Appendixes include a BEEW summary and motivational images.) (Author/BT)

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Making Sense of Women of African Descent's Place in the Politics of (Urban) Space through the Vehicle of Popular Education.

by

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Making sense of women of African descent's place in the politics of (urban) space through the vehicle of popular education.

ABSTRACT

In this paper I will give a brief account of my research work's evolution and a snapshot description of this work. I will also make an argument for using built environment education workshops (BEEWs) as a data collection method in my dissertation research. In my research I will be working with women of African descent to map the connections between their social practices, the spaces that generate them and are generated by them, and the language they use to mediate and/or negotiate those spaces. I intend to use this method to obtain data on 'real' and 'imagined' spatial ideologies, i.e. representations of space and representational spaces, and because I argue that it is a better method for capturing data on spatial experiences than techniques such as interview, survey and/or participant observation. In the development of this research methodology I use feminist popular education models and other relevant feminist perspectives to design the BEEWs. Thus, I am developing a data collection methodology that could well become an ethnography of empowerment. In using BEEWs I will also be inserting my amorphous subjecthood and a womanist standpoint into the research by providing an autobiographical account of my own development of critical spatial literacy and a critical spatial literacy portfolio.

My research process and product are 'real' and 'imagined' effects of Chaos theory. I have been and will continue using Chaos theory as both metaphor and process to capture the dynamic amorphous layered reality of the urban city's postmodern geohistoric condition, the 'place' of women of African descent within it, the role that building industry professionals play in defining the spaces that these women live in, the empowering possibilities within utilising popular education to enable critical understanding of spatial politics, the varied critical theoretical frameworks used to illuminate and define the phenomenon, the foregrounding of my peculiar standpoint within this research agenda, the methods used to develop this standpoint and to gather research data, and last but not least the actual way that I will present the final dissertation research results. I will locate this account within a weave of critical postmodern spatial theory and feminist popular education models.

My intentions are that the process and product of my work should also be concrete examples of a weaving of rational scientific with artistic creation -mind with emotion- in an attempt to dismantle Cartesian binaries and in order to reflect the dynamic reality of women of African descent's lived experiences in the urban context (this would also include myself). By using creative writing, images, artifacts, installations and academic discourse in the representation of my work, I want to actively use Chaos theory's ability to bring the two cultures of science and art together as an essential aspect of my work. Hence, in this paper, the use of June Jordan's poetry to move the reader through my academic discourse. This use of both creative writing and academic discourse is an example of the layering effects of Chaos theory, in which similar themes can be read in both texts. Thus, my work's utilisation of Chaos theory reflects the absolute relationship of the whole and yet the infinite significance of each part whether the part is an element, an action, or a process.

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AERA Conference - April 2000

Poem about My Rights

Even tonight and I need to take a walk and clear
my head about this poem about why I can't
go out without changing my clothes my shoes
my body posture my gender my identity my age
my status as a woman alone in the evening/
alone on the streets/ alone not being the point/
the point being that I can't do what I want
to do with my own body because I am wrong
sex the wrong age the wrong skin and
suppose it was not here in the city but down on the beach/
or far into the woods and I wanted to go
there by myself thinking about God/ or thinking
about children or thinking about the world/ all of it
disclosed by the stars and the silence:
I could not go and I could not think and I could not
stay there
alone
as I need to be

Reasons for understanding popular education's role in the politics of space

To begin with it is important that I insert my standpoint into this account to give a deeper understanding and ur/agency to the research work that I intend to carry out. As a woman of African descent presently in the Diaspora and living in the urban context, I have found that my understanding, negotiation, manipulation, and ownership of space is often confined by the prescribed, gendered and racialised social relations of global capitalism. My deep sense of a lack of spatial agency, within the socioeconomic and sociopolitical structures that I precariously inhabit, has informed my dreams of alternative socio-physical space and consequently their possible translation into concrete reality. As a woman and as a minority, I am particularly disadvantaged within the politics of space.[1] That is, I have been privy to a specific minority and female experience of discrimination by design of the predominantly western man-made built environments (Weisman, 1994). It is this experience that has instigated and motivates this research work.

Today, more than ever, there is uneven development of space within the urban context, which is paradoxically both a direct consequence and a direct cause of the unequal distribution of power and resources along class, racial and gender lines (to name a few). As a result we can observe that in this context social struggle is very specifically inscribed in space (Lefebvre, 1991; Weisman, 1994; Wright, 1997). Yet, in every day social, political, and educational quests for social justice there is very little explicit application of strategic spatial practice, derived from an analysis of spatial configurations, concepts, and ideologies. Keith & Pile (1993) argue that it is "the logic of capital itself that produces an uneven development of space. These spaces need to be 'mapped', so that they can be used by

[1] As pertinent example of a specific effect of the politics of space that I have been privy to, Shaheen Haque (1988) argues that "architecture is also informed by the politics of space. It is essentially about the power structures that fund the white male middle-class architects who make up the body of the profession in Britain today. They create the physical environment in which we live and reinforce through their designs their problematic definitions of women, Black people and the working classes. White middle-class architects reinforce through the built form, their stereotypes of how Black and working class people live. Inevitably the buildings they produce reflect a limited response to the arts and to the social life of the people they design for and by doing so, limit the life choices of Black people and the working class" (pp. 34-35).

oppositional cultures and new social movements against the interests of capital as sites of resistance" (p. 3). At the same time as urban centres have grown and "the production of built space increases in intensity and scale during the later twentieth century, the politics of space becomes more difficult to map" (Hayden, 1995, pp. 41-42).

Rick Allen (1999) argues that the "language needed to speak of [spatial] terms like the 'socio-spatial' or 'geohistorical' [for example] has not been well developed, and in fact has been veiled from view; space has been structured out of the basic way in which social problems are con/textualised, that is, context has been decontextualised as being iterative with the text. The occlusion of the spatial calls for a radical repositioning of spatial analysis and interrogation" (p. 252). Even in the case of the feminist movement where the use of the 'body politick' has been invoked in the contestation of women's 'place,' there has been no clear spatial-political methodology to address the gendered and racialised politics of space. Nor has there been a natural and comfortable insertion of women of African descent into the feminist movement and its struggles.[2] There has not been explicit theorizing of how spatial configurations, which inform and are informed by, socioeconomic and sociopolitical issues affect the daily lives of women of African descent (this includes myself). In fact, despite the feminist awareness that the appropriation of space is a political act, "there is little understanding of the spatial dimensions of "women's issues" and how a knowledge of these dimensions can help map the mental and physical terrain of our struggle for human justice and social transformation" (Weisman, 1994, p. 1-2).

In accounting for who is often either homeless or in low-income housing, within urban built environments[3] of both the USA and the UK, women, ethnic minorities and their children are most represented; as poverty is often a female and/or an ethnic minority issue. And despite adequate data on the extreme and unremitting conditions of poverty, poor housing, and low educational achievement experienced by a substantial number of minority ethnic populations, there has not been any of the following occurrences: (1) sufficient documentation on how these populations construct a spatial language about the 'spaces' or 'places' that they tend to be relegated to, (2) sufficient documentation on their spatial perceptions of low-income housing and/or homelessness, and (3) a consideration of how this sort of information could inform policy-making. Although it has been acknowledged that inadequate housing and poverty are connected to low educational achievement, there has been little attempt to address the fact that homeless populations and families in low-income housing have reduced access to the educational tools and/or language to fully participate in the strategic planning necessary to change their built environment through urban redevelopment. Thus, this lack of action (some might argue intentional action) maintains these populations 'social exclusion' and prevents these populations from effecting extensive structural change in their neighbourhoods and/or cities.

In response to this abysmal state of affairs and as a small but significant contribution to social justice work that centres space in its theoretical development, my

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[2] Critical feminisms have arisen as a response to the traditional feminists analysis of gender, which focused on defining the meaning and explanatory power of the gender concept, the social significance of gender differences, the relationship of the body, sex and gender, and the possibilities for social change with respect to gender. Thus feminist theory has taken the category of women as foundational without realizing that the category effected a closure on the types of feminist discourse that needed to be articulated (DiQuinzio, 1993; Butler 1990). This traditional feminist metanarrative has lead to the exclusion of the experiences of women categorized as Other and the underplaying of other aspects of women's identities, e.g. sexuality, ethnicity, disability, etc. Hence the critical feminist critiques of traditional feminists by for example Black female activists and academics (Collins, 1990; hooks, 1989; hooks, 1994; Hull, Bell & Smith, 1982; Lorde, 1984; Oyewumi, 1997; Walker, 1983).

[3] Urban built environments refers to the type of urban planning and dense building construction that is predominant in urban centers that are plagued by high levels of urban migration.

research intends to develop an understanding of popular education's role in the politics of space. First, by mapping the representational spaces that women of African descent[4] (thus including myself) make of common spatial constructs, e.g. the nuclear house.[5] Second, by comparing these representations to those visualised by the dominant society and those responsible for constructing representations of space. Finally, by exploring the notion of critical spatial literacy, as an example of cognitive mapping (Jameson, 1991), and how it may serve to enable "a new way of seeing through the gratuitous veils of both reactionary postmodernism and late modern historicism to encourage the creation of a politicized spatial consciousness and a radical spatial praxis (Soja, 1989, p. 75). In summary, I will be mapping[6] the connections between social practices, the spaces that generate them and are generated by them, and the language used to dream, design, construct, mediate and/or negotiate those spaces. In addition, through this process, I hope to be involved in the enabling of conscientization and spatial-political agency.

Frederick Jameson (1991) developed a new view of political action in space, and called it the aesthetic of cognitive mapping. Cognitive mapping is meant to simultaneously allow people to become aware of their own position in the world and to provide them with the resources to change their own history. Thus like a popular education approach, such as Paulo Freire's, it advocates the mobilization of a community of individuals, who proceed from analysis to identification of avenues of action to improve their socioeconomic and political power (Freire, 1973; Freire, 1996). Or more importantly, just as in the feminist popular education model that Denise Nadeau (1996) continues to develop, it helps women to understand their daily situation as a structural or macro-analysis of their environment and to enable their exploration of what they can do to transform their daily reality. If we are to accept Keith & Pile's argument that the spaces of uneven development need to be mapped, so that oppositional cultures and social movements can use them against the very interests of capital, then what is needed is a "new kind of spatial imagination capable of confronting the past in a new way and reading its tangible secrets off the template of its spatial structures - body, cosmos, city, as all those marked the more intangible organization of cultural and libidinal economies and linguistic forms" (Jameson, 1991, pp. 364-365). Using the cognitive mapping concept in concert with the theory and praxis of popular education I argue that the development of critical spatial literacy, with women of African descent (this includes myself), is an important focus in my research project. I see the development of critical spatial literacy occurring within built environment education workshops (BEEWs) I

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[4] My use of the descriptor "women of African descent" is with an acute critical awareness of the fact that it may begin to construct an image of a singular, monolithic "Third World woman" subject, be that a woman living in the Diaspora or in her country of origin. This kind of gender construction has been an unfortunate practice visible in texts within the western feminist discourse. Chandra Mohanty (1997) talks of how "a certain mode of appropriation and codification of scholarship and knowledge about women in the Third World through the use of particular analytical categories employed in specific writings on the subject take as their referent feminist interests as they have been articulated in the United States and Western Europe" (p. 255). That is, the use of textual strategies that codify others as non-Western in opposition to the self. By virtue of my western education (despite being an Asante woman living in the diaspora) I am aware of how my work could become complicit in such practices, i.e. doing work which also demonstrates effects of assuming "the west" is the primary referent in theory and praxis. To this end my use of the term "women of African descent" is merely at this juncture to serve as a descriptor that cannot and certainly doe not intend to embody the complexity of these women's lives, which I hope to capture through my research.

[5] Nuclear house refers to houses that are designed and constructed to function for sole use by a nuclear family unit, i.e. father, mother and children.

[6] This process of mapping will include the use of interviews, surveys, participant observations, historical and contemporary documents, building plans, architect's design drawings, building regulations, planner's schemes, social policy, and the artifacts and drawings to be produced by the women of African descent (the research participants) within the built environment education workshops (a data collection method).

will facilitate, with the intention of enabling the new kind of spatial imagination that Jameson calls for. Thus, I define critical spatial literacy as the development of a critical awareness of the sociohistorical, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and sociopolitical meanings that inform and are informed by social-physical constructs (both 'real' and 'imaginary') of the urban built environment. Critical spatial literacy is then the ability to read the codes embedded in the urban built environment as a prelude to assessing the need for transformative spatial-political action. Hence, developing critical spatial literacy with women of African descent is central to my research endeavour and a concrete part of the BEEWs.

alone because I can't do what I want to do with my own
body and
who in the hell set things up
like this
and in France they say if the guy penetrates
but does not ejaculate then he did not rape me
and if after stabbing him if after screams if
after begging the bastard and even after smashing
a hammer to his head if even after that if he
and his buddies fuck me after that
then I consented and there was
no rape because finally you understand finally
they fucked me over because I was wrong I was
wrong again to be me being me where I was/ wrong
to be who I am
which is exactly like South Africa
penetrating into Namibia penetrating into
Angola and does that mean I mean how do you know if
Pretoria ejaculates what will the evidence look like the
proof of the monster jackboot ejaculation on Blackland
and if
after Namibia and if after Zimbabwe
and if after all of my kinsmen and women resist even to
self-immolation of the villages and if after that
we lose nevertheless what will the big boys say will they
claim my consent:
Do You Follow Me: We are the wrong people of
the wrong skin on the wrong continent and what
in the hell is everybody being reasonable about

Chaos Theory as Trope: Theoretical Conceptualisations of Space

My research process and product are 'real' and 'imagined' effects of Chaos theory. In conducting my research which would include enacting BEEWs as a data collection methodology, I would be using Chaos theory as both metaphor and process. I use Chaos theory in this way so as to capture the dynamic amorphous reality of the urban city's postmodern geohistoric condition, the 'place' of women of African descent within it, the role that building industry professionals play in defining the spaces that these women live in, the empowering possibilities within utilising popular education to enable critical understanding of spatial politics, the varied critical theoretical frameworks used to illuminate and define the phenomenon, the foregrounding of my peculiar standpoint[7] within this research agenda, the

[7] As defined by Patricia Hill-Collins (1991).

methods used to develop this standpoint and to gather research data, and last but not least the actual way that I will present the final dissertation research results.

I find it relevant to use Chaos theory as the framework for describing these 'imagined' thus 'real' spaces because "Chaos theory tells the story of the wild things that happen to dynamical systems as they evolve over time" (John Briggs, 1992, p. 22). Briggs defines dynamical systems as unpredictable, sensitive and nonlinear because they are open to both outside influences and to their own subtle internal fluctuations. "In other words, dynamical systems imply a holism in which everything influences, everything else - because everything is in some sense constantly interacting with everything else. At any moment, the feedback in a dynamical system may amplify some unsuspected "external" or "internal" influence, displaying this holistic interconnection. So paradoxically, the study of chaos is also the study of wholeness" (p. 21).

It is one thing to recognise that the redevelopment and/or development of urban social-physical space are products of struggle between contesting social imaginary. It is another to develop a language that critiques this system but at the same time does not fossilize or limit the system's dynamic reality through its categorisations. Thus, I find it useful to tentatively describe the effects of this dialectical contestation over space in terms of social practices, representations of space and representational spaces (Lefebvre, 1991). Henri Lefebvre specifies that in order to theorize about the production of space we need to examine space in terms of (1) spatial practices, (2) representations of space, and (3) representational spaces. Using this rubric means that we begin to understand these terms as follows:

1. Social practice "embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial characteristic of each social formation. Spatial practice ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33) Spatial practice, or alternatively social practice as referred to by Talmadge Wright (1997) fix social-physical spatial meanings, by "reinforcing the distinctions created within and between the relations of economic, political, and cultural power operating through everyday life. ...Social practices are therefore, generated by the workings of social imaginary signification through symbolic networks. These networks are contained within social-physical space, by actors responding to, interpreting, resisting, and acting on their everyday life, through their bodies and on the bodies of others..." (pp. 42-43).
2. Representations of space "are tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Representations of space are abstract, but they also play a part in social and political practice. They have a practical impact on urban society as they intervene and modify space. Thus they have a substantial role and influence in the normative production of urban space as we know it (Lefebvre, 1991). For example, it is within this space that women know their 'place,' where "boundaries between the public and private, the political and social, the productive and reproductive, and justice and family [are] established, and justified by women's absence in the first and presence in the second" (Schirmer, 1994, p.188).
3. Representational spaces are "complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also art" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Thus representational spaces obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. They are of the imaginary and the symbolic, but are firmly embedded in the history of the individual and the community. Thus this space is "directly lived through its associated images and symbols" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). It is a space within which change is attempted as a challenge to dominant social imaginary. It is a space of possibility. For there to be any understanding of how to

> enable critical spatial literacy, it is important to recognise that within representational spaces there is the potential to transcend representations of space and the social practices expected, as the "ability of people to confound the established spatial orders, either through physical movement or through their own conceptual and political reimagination, means that space and place can never be "given" and that the process of their sociopolitical construction must always be considered" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, p. 47).

Whilst utilising Lefebvre's spatial categorisation to comprehend spatial contestations I also find it necessary to recognise that these categorisations are not static, and their boundaries are not fixed. Indeed they are in constant relational flux and dialectic. Thus, my use of Chaos theory as a suitable trope to describe these conditions and frame my work, as it describes dynamical systems that are also paradoxically fixed. Central to Chaos theory is the concept of layering, i.e. the very 'real' existence of copies, and copies of copies within them. I do not refer to copies in the ludic postmodern sense of simulacra (Baudrillard, 1983) -that pits the authenticity of reality against the mere shadow of its copy- but rather refer to the self-replication of dynamic systems (Briggs, 1992). Dynamic systems, which are holistic, have 'parts' within which there are 'parts of parts' that contain their own 'parts of parts' and so on. These 'parts' and 'parts of parts,' as a natural state, feed into each other and generate images who's patterns have scaling detail, i.e. the systems whole movement takes place continuously and simultaneously at every scale. Investing in this amorphous yet ordered nature of chaos, I will be observing, participating in, co-constructing and representing a woven presentation of the experiences of women of African descent living in urban settings and the various theories that inform my research work; in order that you may also see the constant replication of a theme that is about using everyday past and present lived experiences as tools to develop critical spatial literacy so as to better read the world and to begin to enable imagined future possibility.

Chaos theory is an invaluable trope as it also adequately describes what we commonly refer to as 'places,' in its description of fractal geometry. John Briggs (1992) speaks of fractal geometry as a mechanism that records the images of a dynamic system's movement in space. "Fractal geometry describes the tracks and marks left by the passage of dynamical activity" (p. 22) Fractal geometry can then be said to describe place as one kind of image within the dynamic system of space in its broadest sense. A representation of space such as this speaks to Doreen Massey's (1991) conceptions of space. She argues that place is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations. Thus each place can be seen "as a particular, unique, point of their intersection" (p. 28). Places then become articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings. It is in these unevenly developed places that individuals and groups experience the postmodern[8] condition and the ravaging effects of time-space-compression[9] differentially and unequally (Massey, 1991; Massey, 1994). In that, the "forces of new technologies, globalization and 'time-space compression' have together created a sense of information flows, fragmentation and pace replacing what is now perceived to be a previous stability of homogeneity, community and place. Yet, this time-space compression has not been experienced by all in the same way: whilst some initiate its operation others are constrained by it. This is seen nowhere more clearly than in the contemporary city" (Carter, Donald & Squires, 1993, p. viii) and more than anyone else women of African descent chronically experience the constraint effects of time-space-compression.

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[8] I am still in the process of trying to deepen my understanding of the critical spatial discourse of postmodern geographers such as Doreen Massey, David Harvey, Edward Soja, etc. This discourse explicates the socioeconomic and sociopolitical contexts of the urban landscape, as it is today, thus provides insights into the implications for women of African descent's social relations and experiences.

[9] Time-space-compression is the annihilation of space by global capitalism's time.

For women of African descent "the body, the home, and the street have all been arenas of conflict. [Thus, the examination of these spaces] as political territories - bounded spaces with some form of enforcement of the boundaries - helps us to analyze the spatial dimensions of "woman's sphere" at any given time. And just as gender can be mapped as a struggle over social reproduction that occurs at various scales of space, the same is true of race, class, and many other social issues" (Hayden, 1995, pp. 22-23). The bounded spaces that Hayden refers to are hegemonic social constructs used to discipline space, i.e. in the design and construction of representations of space. For example, when planning authorities, in the USA, use zoning (on both a microlevel and macrolevel) as a strategy for disciplining social-physical space. Planning authorities discipline space by the classification (i.e., the naming, labeling and bounding) of space into particular functional entities and locations, e.g. allocation of spaces that include or exclude particular population groups or functions. The disciplining of space in this way imposes abstract space on everyday life, and in doing so predisposes the users of those spaces towards certain social or spatial practice (Wright, 1997). However, in actuality, lived spaces are permeable due to social networks, communication and movement (travel) that take places, thus as useful as the boundary metaphor is it must also be problematized in order to make room for discussing agency and the complex dynamic of socio-spatial practices. Thus, I reiterate my point that fractals, as a concept in Chaos theory, are a useful metaphor for the description of the world's roughness, energy, dynamical changes and transformations. Since "[f]ractals are images of the way things fold and unfold, feeding back into each other and themselves" (Briggs, 1992, p. 23). Therefore our dreams of the places that we inhabit and the reality of them *are* unique articulations (fractals) of the networks of our social relations. It is within these articulated moments and in resistance to the dislocating and disorienting effects of globalisation that representations of space gain a transformative significance. Thus, speaking to Carter, Donald & Squires (1993) argument that as "the distinct history and heritage of certain places becomes increasingly difficult to maintain amidst the flux of contemporary capital, there is a sense that if cities are to act as locations for identity once again, the must be 'reimagined' as such" (p. viii). In summary, my research work's utilisation of Chaos theory would enable it to both reflect and exist as the absolute relationship of the whole and yet the infinite significance of each part whether the part is an element, an action, or a process.

and according to the *Times* this week
back in 1966 the C.I.A. decided that they had this problem
and the problem was a man named Nkrumah so they
killed him and before that it was Patrice Lumumba
and before that it was my father on the campus
of my Ivy League school and my father afraid
to walk into the cafeteria because he said he
was wrong the wrong age the wrong skin the wrong
gender identity and he was paying my tuition and
before that
it was my father saying I was wrong saying that
I should have been a boy because he wanted one/ a
boy and that I should have been lighter skinned and
that I should have straighter hair and that
I should not be so boy crazy but instead I should
just be one/ a boy and before that
it was my mother pleading plastic surgery for my nose and braces for my teeth and telling me
to let the books loose to let them loose in other

words
I am very familiar with the problems of the C.I.A.
and the problems of South Africa and the problems
of Exxon Corporation and the problems of the teachers
and the preachers and the F.B.I. and the social
workers and my particular Mom and Dad/ I am very
familiar with the problems because the problems
turn out to be
me

The nuclear house: Its significance in contesting gender discrimination by design

As a woman of African descent trained as an architect and from my autobiographical relationship with the urban built environment, it is natural[10] that I agree with the argument that building is a complex activity that has a significant place in our repertoire of basic human needs. Building, as a noun and an adjective, makes people aware and take heed at various different levels. Firstly at the level of having to make pragmatic decisions, secondly at the level of envisioning architectural spaces in the mind, on paper, and finally at the level of committing one's whole being, mind and body, to the creation of a material form that captures an ideal (Tuan, 1977). Our buildings, neighborhoods and cities are indeed cultural artifacts shaped by our human intention and intervention (Weisman, 1994). The built environment, both historically and as we know it, clarifies social roles and relations. "People know better who they are and how they ought to behave when the arena is humanly designed rather than nature's raw stage" (Tuan, 1977, p. 102). Thus, the built environment provides an essential framework for thinking about the world and the people within it, in that the spatial language used constantly signifies its function (Weisman 1994). As a further example of the influence of the built environment on our social relations, "architecture "teaches." A planned city, a monument, or even a simple dwelling can be a symbol of the cosmos. In the absence of books and formal instruction, architecture is a key to comprehending reality" (Tuan, 1977, p. 102).

In looking at modern society's understanding of their built environment, it is obvious that "there may be greater awareness of built forms and space in a traditional than in a modern community. One cause of such greater awareness is active participation. Since nonliterate and peasant societies do not have architects, everyone makes his own house and helps to make public spaces" (Tuan, 1977, p. 104). This making of one's own house is important, as in constructing one's house it is imbued with a functional, aesthetical and philosophical essence that is representative of that individual's interpretation of social relations. For this reason, "[i]n some societies the building is the primary text for handing down a tradition, for presenting a view of reality. To nonliterate people the house may be not only a shelter but also a ritual place and the locus of economic activity. Such a house can communicate ideas even more effectively than can ritual. Its symbols form a system and are vividly real to the family members as they pass through the different stages of life" (p. 112).

Tuan (1977) further argues that because in the modern world people no longer participate in the construction of their homes, or in the construction of public monuments, the rites and ceremonies that relate to the construction of the built environment have greatly declined. Thus the "house is no longer a text encoding rules of behavior and even a whole world view that can be transmitted down the generations" (p. 118). Although I would agree with the argument that within the urban context the majority of people do not actively participate in the design and construction of built space, I would entirely disagree with

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[10] I recognise that my interest in matters to do with architecture and building is socially constructed, but here I chose to use the common sense use of the word natural to facilitate the reading of the statement.

Tuan's notion that the house is no longer a text encoding rules of behavior. I propose that the nuclear house is a place that has been coded into a site of oppression for female populations, living in urban environments that are based on western binary spatial constructs. The nuclear house is a representation of space that is predominantly visualised as female rather than male, private rather than public, body rather than mind, and object rather than subject. Thus as a representation of space the nuclear house signifies a private locality of social segregation that in no way embodies a female concept of functional or aesthetic space. Yet the nuclear house can also be a place of possibility, i.e. "one's homeplace [is] the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist" (hooks, 1991, p. 42).

However, the potential of the nuclear house to constrict women's social relations is also symbolic of how "men are the main decision makers in the allocation of family budget and in determining the various priorities of the family. Combining child rearing, housekeeping, income generation and a subordinate role in budget allocation has several implications for women in terms of their requirements, priorities, and possible contribution towards community development. Planning and development of housing schemes or projects for provision of infrastructure are not sensitive, in general, to their needs and priorities" (Bhatnagar, 1992, pp. 34-35). And in most countries progress towards equality of basic and equal human rights, such as housing, employment and education, are often hampered by societal norms, religious beliefs and legal structures which limit the actions and potential of women (Basolo & Morlan, 1993).

Placing this specific argument in the context of my previous arguments, I would once again stress that it is important for women (particularly of African descent) to be active participants in the process of designing and developing housing policy and housing itself. The development of housing for these women and by these women would enable their sense of empowerment, through the ownership of the housing development and management process. For example, a female sense of empowerment in relation to their housing is essential when you understand that the increasing percentages of single female-headed households and the issue of homelessness of women (often resulting from purely economic reasons but also from domestic violence, alcohol, and drug abuse), are some of the problems that describe an actual social crisis for which theoretical inquiry and architectural explorations should begin to provide answers (Mangana, 1992). It is then inevitable logic that those who experience homelessness and its effects are best placed to provide sustainable built solutions for their own predicament. This is not to say that all homeless or publicly housed ethnic minority women are in a position to adequately analyze their circumstances and efficiently design suitable housing solutions, but that women must be provided with the educational tools to develop critical spatial literacy and spatial-political agency.

I make all these arguments in the belief that when "all homemakers recognize that they are struggling against both gender stereotypes and wage discrimination, when they see that social, economic, and environmental changes are necessary to overcome these conditions, they will no longer tolerate housing and cities, designed around the principles of another era, that proclaim that 'a woman's place is in the home'" (Hayden, 1986, p. 245). Thus, as Hayden also believes, the solution to this female problem is the development of "a new paradigm of the home, the neighbourhood, and the city; to begin to describe the physical, social, and economic design of a human settlement that would support, rather than restrict, the activities of employed women and their families" (pp. 230-231). All of us, especially minority ethnic women experiencing homelessness and that are publicly housed, should be enabled to develop and act on new paradigms that are not only reflective of our own local everyday needs, but also that of the rest of our community.

I am the history of rape
I am the history of the rejection of who I am
I am the history of the terrorized incarceration of
my self
I am the history of battery assault and limitless
armies against whatever I want to do with my mind
and my body and my soul and
whether it's about walking out at night
or whether it's about the love that I feel or
whether it's about the sanctity of my vagina or
the sanctity of my national boundaries
or the sanctity of my leaders of the sanctity
of each and every desire
that I know from my personal and idiosyncratic
and indisputable single and singular heart
I have been raped
be-
cause I have been wrong the wrong sex the wrong age
the wrong skin the wrong nose the wrong hair the
wrong need the wrong dream the wrong geographic
the wrong sartorial I
I have been the meaning of rape
I have been the problem everyone seeks to
eliminate by forced
penetration with or without the evidence of slime and/
but let this be unmistakable this poem
is not consent I do not consent
to my mother to my father to the teachers to
the F.B.I. to South Africa to Bedford-Stuy
to Park Avenue to American Airlines to the hardon
idlers on the corners to the sneaky creeps in
cars

Developing Critical Spatial Literacy: BEEWs

The use of built environment education workshops[11] (BEEWs) as a data collection process is of major importance to my research on the spatial representations of women of African descent. I intend to use this data collection process as a way to gather data on the spatial representations that the women have, and the language that they use to articulate and negotiate the spaces they inhabit. I will use feminist sociolinguistic understandings of whether men and women use language differently in their interactions, and for what purposes, to analyse the language used by these women and those, usually men, that design and construct the spaces they inhabit. My analysis of the language used is rooted in the argument that "the role of language is a strongly constitutive one, and some may even take

[11] As the BEEW is not a common qualitative research concept, but is an essential part of this research project I have detailed, in Appendix 1, a summary of a BEEW. This summary includes the BEEW's main objective, the BEEW's topic or focus area, the BEEW's main activities, examples of materials that can be used in a BEEW, and the BEEW final evaluation criteria. This BEEW summary that I detail is not presented as a fait accompli. It is rather a general framework, as any BEEW is predicated on its agenda being co-constructed by both the researcher and the research participants. This means that all involved in this process will have some say on the overall objective and content of the BEEW as it relates to the research project and the improvement of the lives of the community being researched.

this to mean that there is no social reality outside language and discourse" (Cameron, 1998, p. 962). The BEEWs participants and I (as its facilitator) would become field researchers of their communities and themselves. We would collect words, phrases, activities, gestures and objects as typical representations of the spaces or places that they inhabit. We would do this with the recognition that "everyday life, however ordinary, always reveals important connections with the social, historical, and political contexts" (Stromquist, 1997, p. 55). We would use these tools to design and create 3-D representations of their individual and/or collective 'place' as women in their community and to draw 2-D representations of their collective built environmental fantasies (Weisman, 1994). This making of what I term critical spatial literacy portfolios would serve as a way of capturing the embodied nature of spatial constructs, which cannot be adequately captured by only using techniques such as interview, survey, or participant observation. The BEEWs would also demonstrate, by its use of everyday activity as a conscientization opportunity, that "we are living in a 'life-world', a world that has its center in our body but is extended to our surroundings, that is the content of our consciousness and the object of our actions. Consciousness and actions are *between* our body and the surroundings. This is the place where learning occurs, this learning changes the relationship between ourselves and our surroundings" (Larsson, 1997, p. 253).

In the development of BEEWs I utilize a womanist[12] perspective (Walker, 1983) in conjunction with approaches such as the development of 'culture circles' (Freire, 1973; Freire, 1998); the skills of dressmaking design as an analogy for building design; feminist methodologies used in women's architectural workshops (Weisman, 1994), in women's literacy workshops (Bee, 1993), and in women's critical economic literacy workshops (Nadeau 1996). The BEEWs will utilize code pictures and culture notebooks, as did Freire, but in ways that represent a strong female perspective. By referring to a female perspective I do not wish to suggest that there is a homogenous female perspective/ identity, I rather refer to the similar position of neglect that women experience when inhabiting urban centers that are designed by men of power. I also refer to a female perspective/ identity as a strategic use of a positivistic essentialism in order to enable a politics that gives voice to women's built environment experiences. "Gayatri Spivak has argued that feminists need to rely on an operational essentialism, a false ontology of women as a universal in order to advance a feminist political program" (Butler, 1990, p. 325). Hence my reference to a female perspective/ identity is to insist on the use of theory as functional tool and in this case where

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[12] Alice Walker (1983) in her book 'In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose', defines the term womanist in these four ways:

1. "From womanish. (Opp. of 'girlish', i.e., frivilous, irresponsible, not serious). A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, 'You acting womanish' i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: 'You trying to be grown.' Responsible. In charge. *Serious*.
2. Also: A woman who loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men sexually and/or nonsexually. Commited to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in 'Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, biege, and black?' Ans.: 'Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every 'Mama, I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.' Reply: 'It wouldn't be the first time.
3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*.
4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender" (pp. xi-xii)

female identity formation is imperative this use of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak, 1990; Spivak, 1993). Thus this womanist approach to the urban built environment is my recognition of these common female realities of neglect. It is also a method for speaking with and of various female subalterns, within complex relational dynamic systems, but in a way that intentionally and self-consciously develops a central politic. The use of artifacts in the BEEW, such as language, notebooks, pictures and 3D autobiographical artifacts, would serve as cultural mediators for the description and re-inscription of women's cultural roles in the 'western male' dominated socioeconomic, sociopolitical and sociocultural relationships of urban centers.

My interest in using the BEEW as a data collection process also stems from a belief that it would enable women's collective ownership of the language of space production. This being important as space is not simply a reflection of economic contradictions, but rather a fundamental aspect of the production process itself (Lefebvre, 1991). The BEEW would also attempt to represent an Ethnography of Empowerment framework, which "calls for the construction of knowledge through the social interaction between researcher and researched, with the fundamental purpose of improving the living conditions of the communities being researched" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993, p. 392). In addition, by facilitating the creation of 3-Dimensional artifacts and 2-Dimensional drawings[13] I would be drawing on my own autobiographical account of invisible homelessness, being socially housed, and the development of my own critical spatial literacy portfolio.[14] Resulting in our use of an autobiographical curriculum (currere) "as a strategy devised to disclose experience, so that we may see more clearly. With such a seeing can come a deepened understanding of the running, and with this can come deepened agency (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. vii).

I am not wrong: Wrong is not my name
My name is my own my own my own
and I can't tell you who the hell set things up like this
but I can tell you that from now on my resistance
my simple and daily and nightly determination
may very well cost you your life

-June Jordan
"Lyrical Campaigns."

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[13] In Appendix 2, I have examples of 2-Dimensional drawings from a BEEW conducted at the Journal of Curriculum Theorizing Conference (October 30, 1999). In this BEEW the participants (male and female academics) were asked to draw representations of what they would like academic space to be in spatial terms. (Note: This definition of spatial includes the metaphysical, the social, as well as the physical.)

[14] In Appendix 3, I have pictures of an artifact from my critical literacy portfolio. This artifact is a representation of my standpoint and spatial experience. The artifact is a reversible waistcoat with one side representing my facade (which is applied, smooth, seamless, defined and ordered) and the other the inner self (which is patchworked, textured, ragged edged, amorphous and chaotic). These two sides are not mutually exclusive, but are rather mutually informing; hence in the waistcoat they seep into each other through bias binding and overhanging borders. In the making of this artifact the borrowed images are as follows: (1) Image of dancing black women (Elbers, 1992, p. 15). (2) Poem called 'We need a God who bleeds now' (Shange, 1994, p. 32). (3) Image of infertile mucus blocking the path of sperm (Mosse & Heaton, 1990, p. 129). (4) 'The Rape' by Rene Magritte (Gablik, 1991, p. 107). (5) Image of a female torso, with jug handles, hanging from a bar - by John Holmes (Greer, 1991, cover illustration).

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APPENDIX 1

Built Environment Education Workshop Summary

Main Objective:
The women would develop a critical and functional spatial literacy by undertaking the following:

- Developing clear and organized oral communication on spatial concepts, i.e. organising ideas chronologically or around major points of information.
- Developing spatial literacy i.e. to be able to evaluate how space is designed e.g. the spatial creation of private as female and public as male. To understand how these ideological separations are manifested into physical space.
- Developing a critical awareness of the woman's role within the private-house vs. public-world out there binary system.
- Developing a critical awareness of how the house as a home can predispose women into subordinate roles that are tightly linked to biological arguments.
- Developing ethnographic skills by assessing the meanings imbued in everyday objects, in order to select and collate such objects for artistic representation and critical analysis of physical space.
- Developing an understanding that when women speak, with one voice, about women's experiences of oppression that there is actually more than one voice speaking in unison.
- Developing an autobiographical account of the self in order to see and analyse the structural effects on everyday living.
- Begin to identify the functional and aesthetic ideologies that determine the spatial realities of their urban built environment, with the intention of defining their own.
- Begin to develop their existing spatial vocabulary with the intention of being able to construct/ create new spatial possibilities.
- Begin to co-construct a spatial language of possibility i.e. to invent ideological suggestions for a transformative urban built environment and finally to extract practical solutions from these.
- Developing an understanding of what it may mean to actively try to change existing urban built environment problems and concerns.
- Developing an understanding of what it means for the researcher (myself) to be a womanist, i.e. feminist of color, and how that resource could be useful for the BEEW process.

Topic Area:
How can we, as minority ethnic women, analyse and make sense of our separate and subordinate positions in society especially in relation to the house and the city. Also how can we address the constraints that we are bound by, thus construct alternative possibilities.

Main Activities:

1. The women would do ethnographic research on themselves through the collection of everyday experiences, e.g. words, texts, objects, gestures, activities, etc., which are representative of their spatial selves, as perceived by others and as perceived by themselves.

2. The women would discuss concepts that relate to the words, such e.g. women, mother, house, home, private, public, and other words of their own selection, as well as motivational images (see attached) to analyse their built environment.

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3. The women would design and create a 3-Dimensional autobiographical artifact with the use of materials gathered and provided. This artifact would act as data; it would also represent the women's sociocultural and historical position within the politics of space. These artifacts would also bear text or images, which represents the spatial vocabulary that they have and that they would have begun to appropriate.

4. The women would present these artifacts to the group.

5. The women would draw individual environmental fantasies i.e. images of what they imagine the world can be (NB: The quality of the drawings is not of importance and this will be stressed).

6. The women would discuss their drawings with the group, explaining what their built environment vision is, and how it relates to each other's vision.

7. The women, as a group, would begin to investigate how some of their dreams can be realized i.e. the practical potential to design a house and city of possibilities.

Examples of materials to use:
Fabric of different types and colors, everyday objects from the women's homes or environments, sewing machines, fabric paint, dyes, poster paper, paints, colored pencils, markers, scissors, needles and thread.

Final Evaluation:
The research project will be evaluated using the following criteria: (1) The content and direction of discussions had with the women as a group. (2) The completion of the women's various artifacts and their presentation to the research group. (3) The women's comments on the value of the research process, including the BEEWs. (4) The women's comments on my completed research report. (5) The general responses received from the women, building professionals, the public, etc. on the final exhibition and the presentation of the report. (6) The compilation of urban built environment re-development ideas as possibilities for policy making; thus the women's beginning or continued attempts to develop practical strategies to achieve the imagined and discussed spatial possibilities.

BEEW – Motivational Images

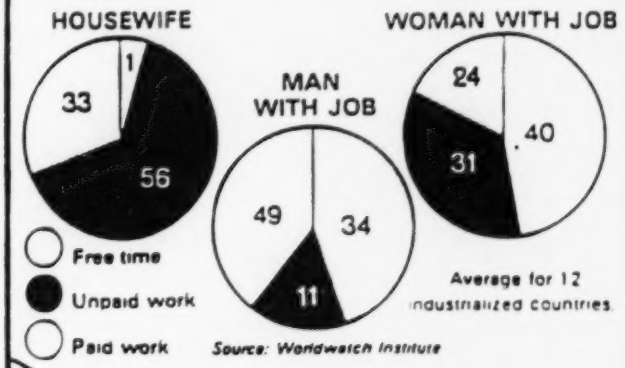
SOURCES: Bullock, 1994 and Vickers, 1991.

INVISIBLE WOMEN

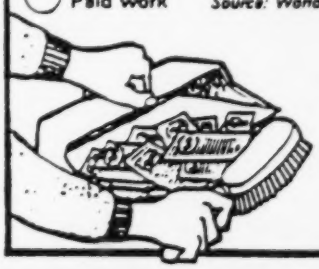
Women the world over are making a vast and unacknowledged contribution to the wealth and welfare of their communities – in unpaid domestic work and in small-scale business and trading activities. Often these women are household heads with sole responsibility for their families. THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN REPORT 1985.

THE HOUSEWIFE

Domestic work is "woman's work" whether she is in paid employment or not.



Source: Worldwatch Institute



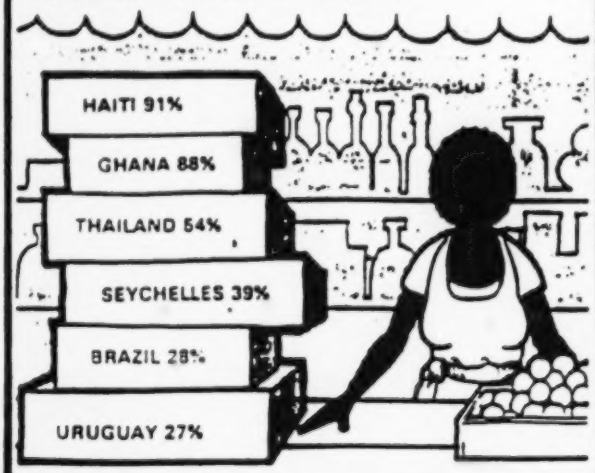
If the value of housework is calculated as equivalent to those services performed by cooks, cleaners and nurses, it contributes up to half the gross national product in many countries.

Source: ILO

THE ENTREPRENEUR

In many countries it is women who dominate the informal sector – the small-scale trade in goods and services not usually counted in national economic statistics.

In many Third World cities the informal sector generates up to a third of local wealth.



% of people in trade who are women

Source: ILO

THE SINGLE WOMAN

Divorce, separation, widowhood and migration are major reasons for the worldwide increase in the number and percentage of female-headed households. Such households are among the poorest in the world.

MIGRATION

In developing countries migration is the main cause of the rise in female-headed households.

AFRICA
Sudan 22%
Kenya 30%
Ghana 27%
Malawi 29%

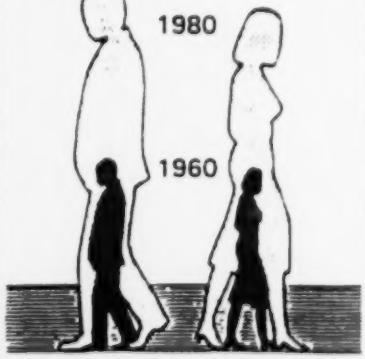
LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN
Jamaica 34%
Peru 23%
Honduras 22%
Venezuela 20%

% of households headed by women

Source: US Bureau of the Census

DIVORCE

In many countries – developed and developing – divorce rates are rising and fewer couples are getting married.

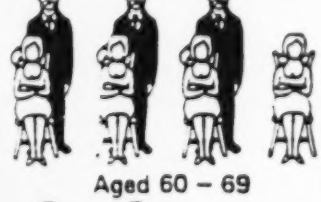


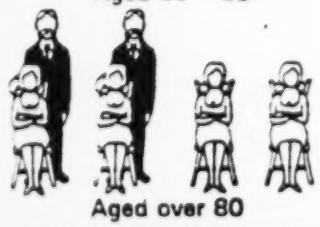
Since 1960 the divorce rate has more than doubled in every European country.

Source: EEC

WIDOWS

Because women live longer than men and tend to marry men older than themselves, more women are widowed than men.





Source: UN World Assembly on Aging

Figures for industrialized countries.

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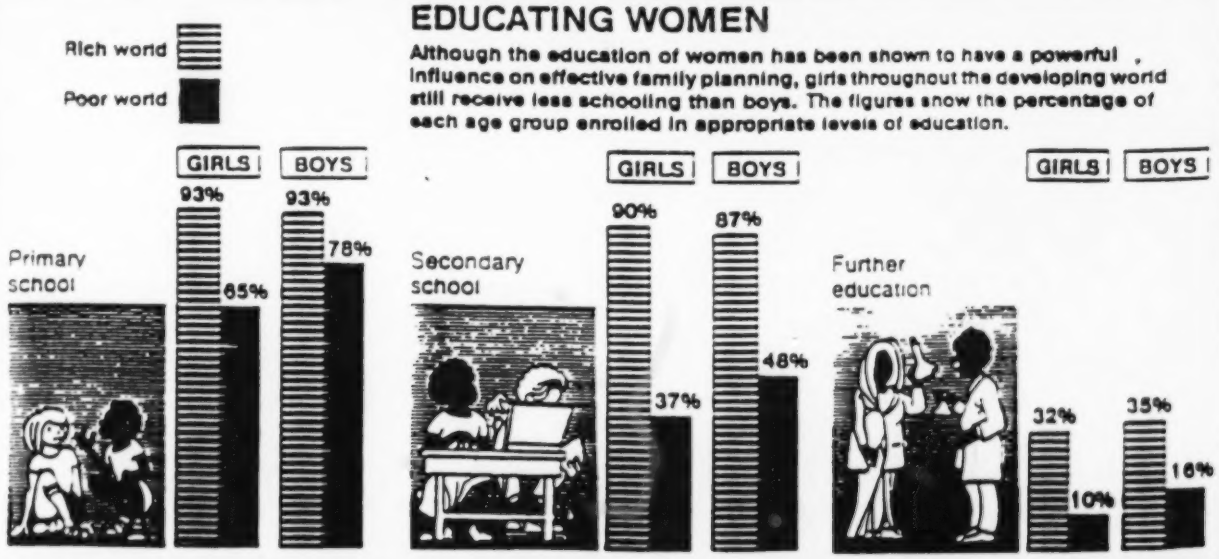
Women in the landscape

Women as fetchers of water, collectors of firewood, tillers of the land and as mothers are usually the first to feel the effects of environmental degradation in the developing world. They are also in the best position to manage the environment but their role is frequently ignored by policy makers and planners.

In Africa, women are responsible for 75% of all subsistence agriculture and 95% of domestic work.

EDUCATING WOMEN

Although the education of women has been shown to have a powerful influence on effective family planning, girls throughout the developing world still receive less schooling than boys. The figures show the percentage of each age group enrolled in appropriate levels of education.



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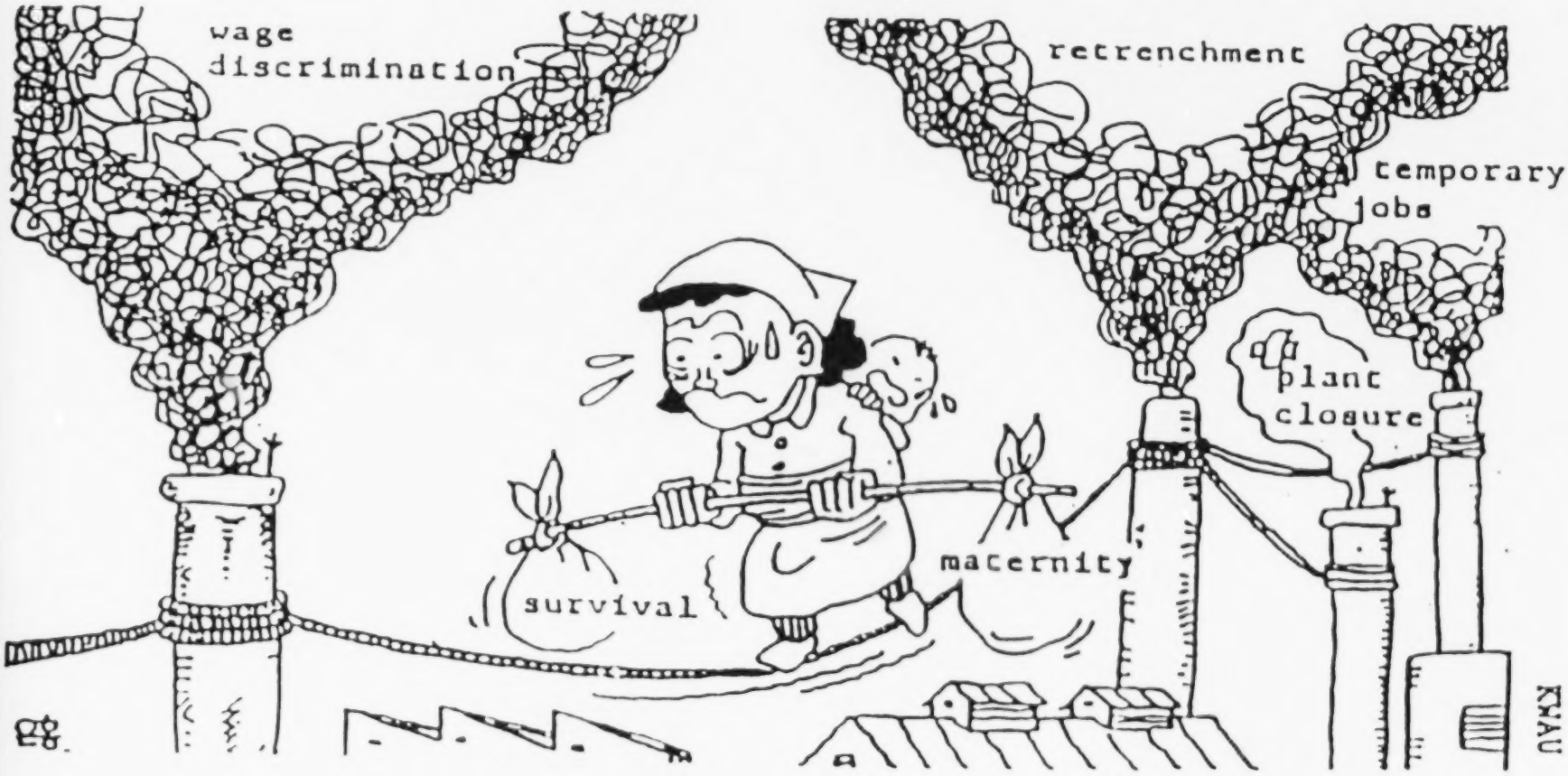
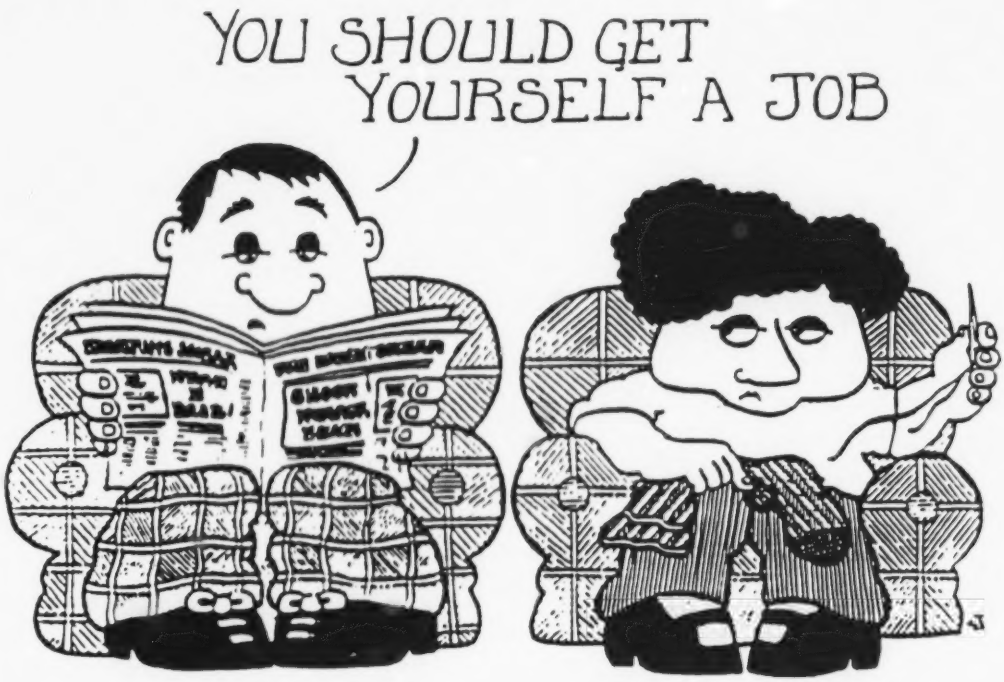


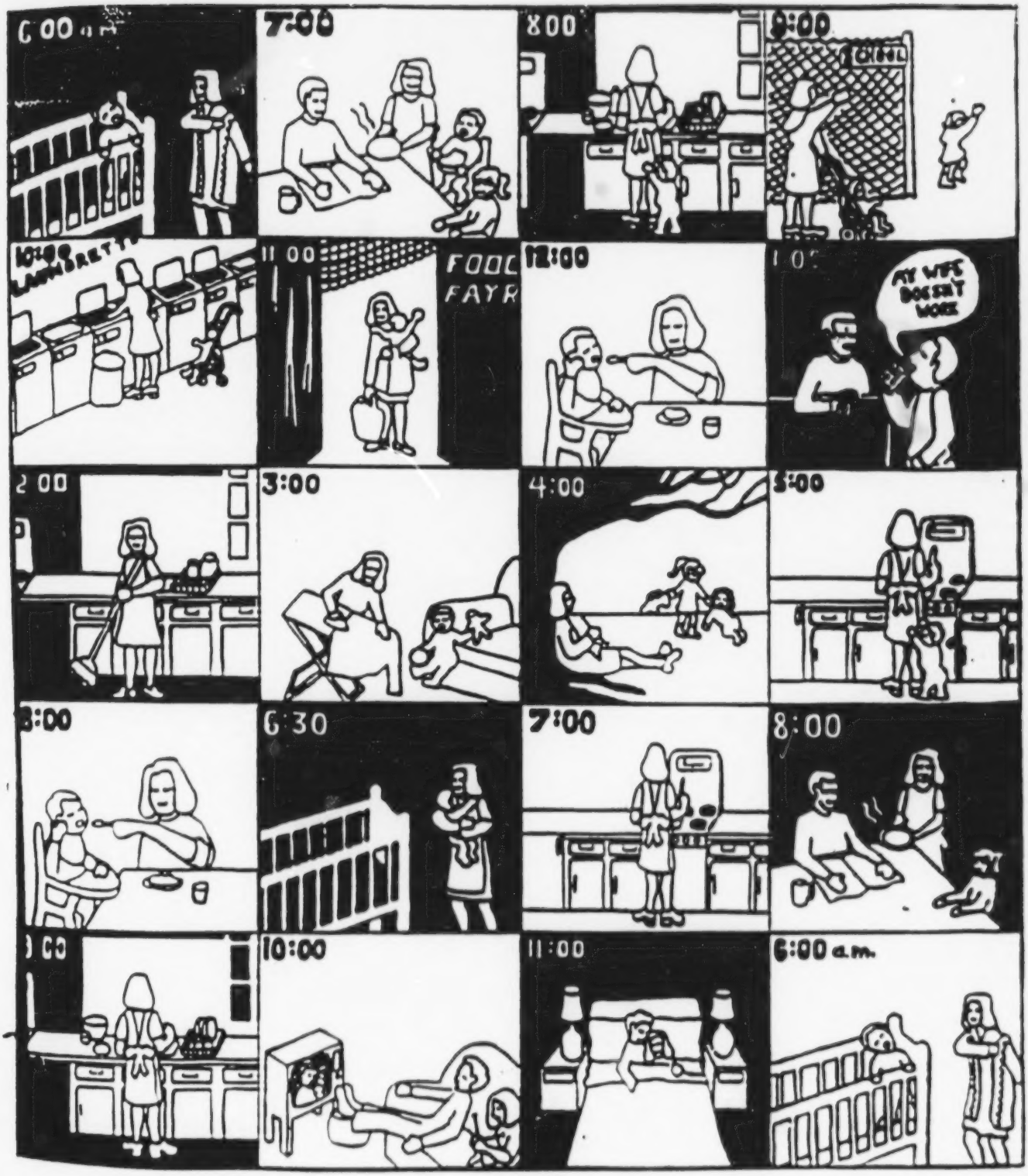
CARTOON: KOREAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION UNITED



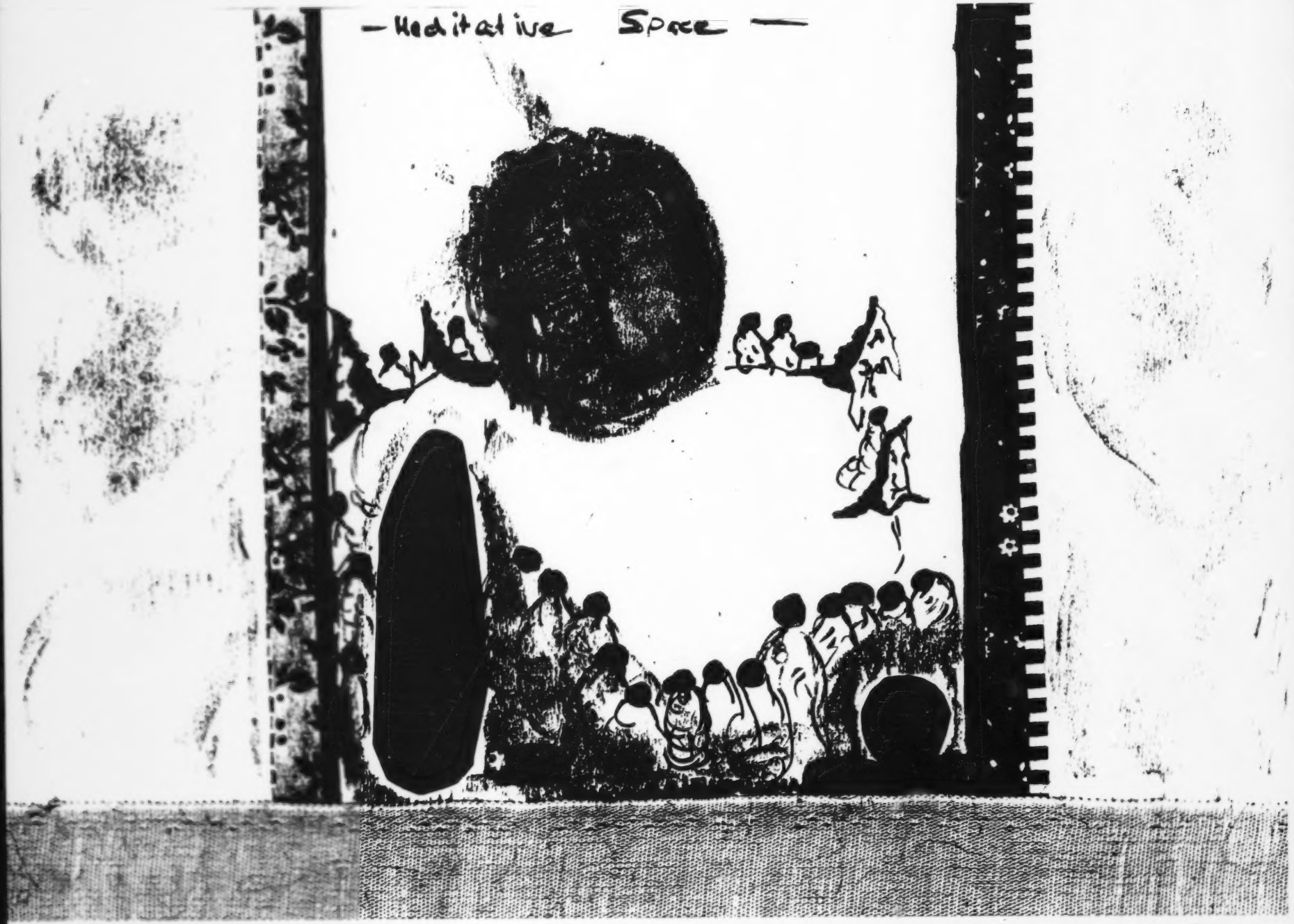
"A woman's domestic role as wife and mother – which is vital to the well-being of the whole society – is unpaid and undervalued", says the State of the World's Women Report 1985.

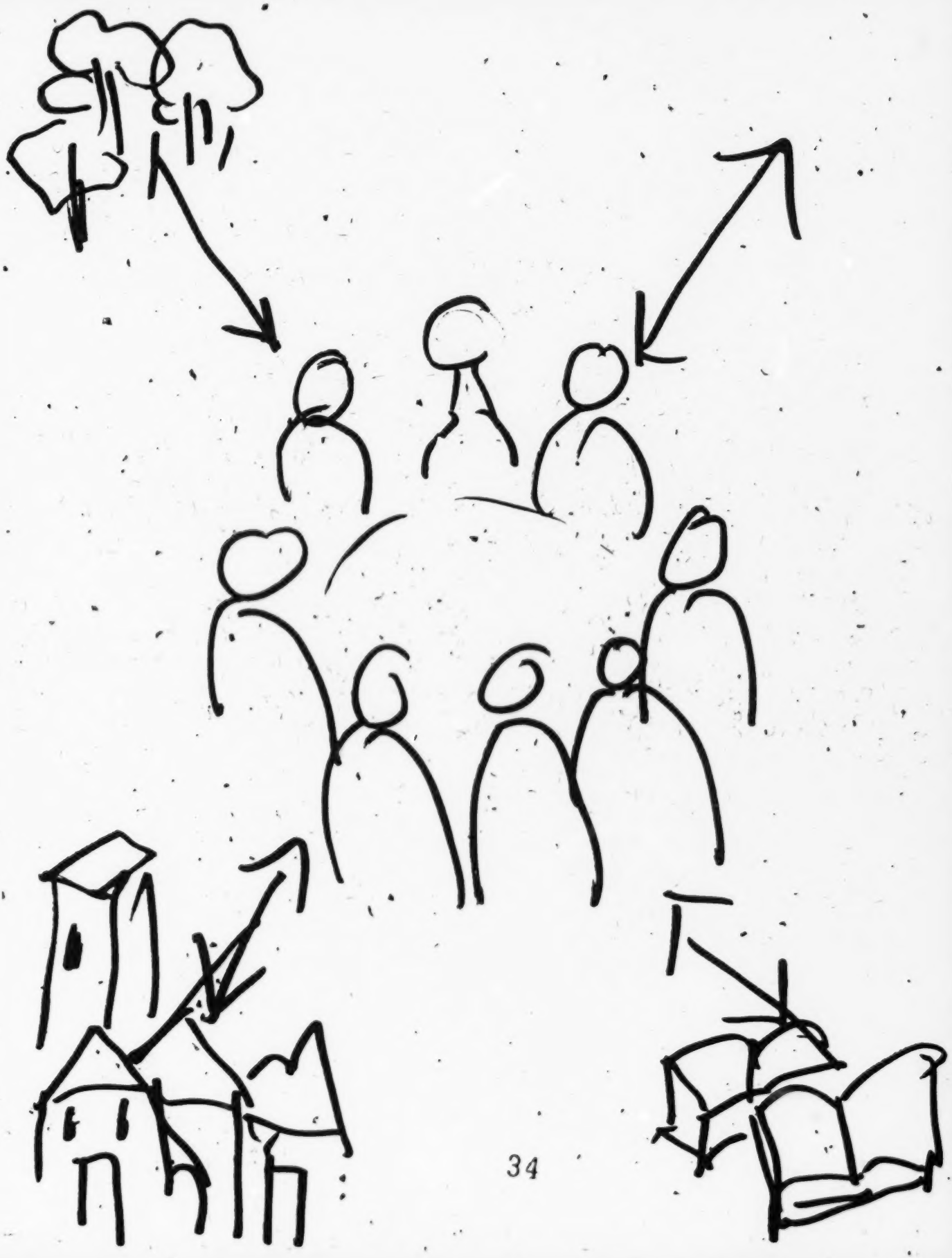
Cartoons by Cath Jackson

MY WIFE DOESN'T WORK.

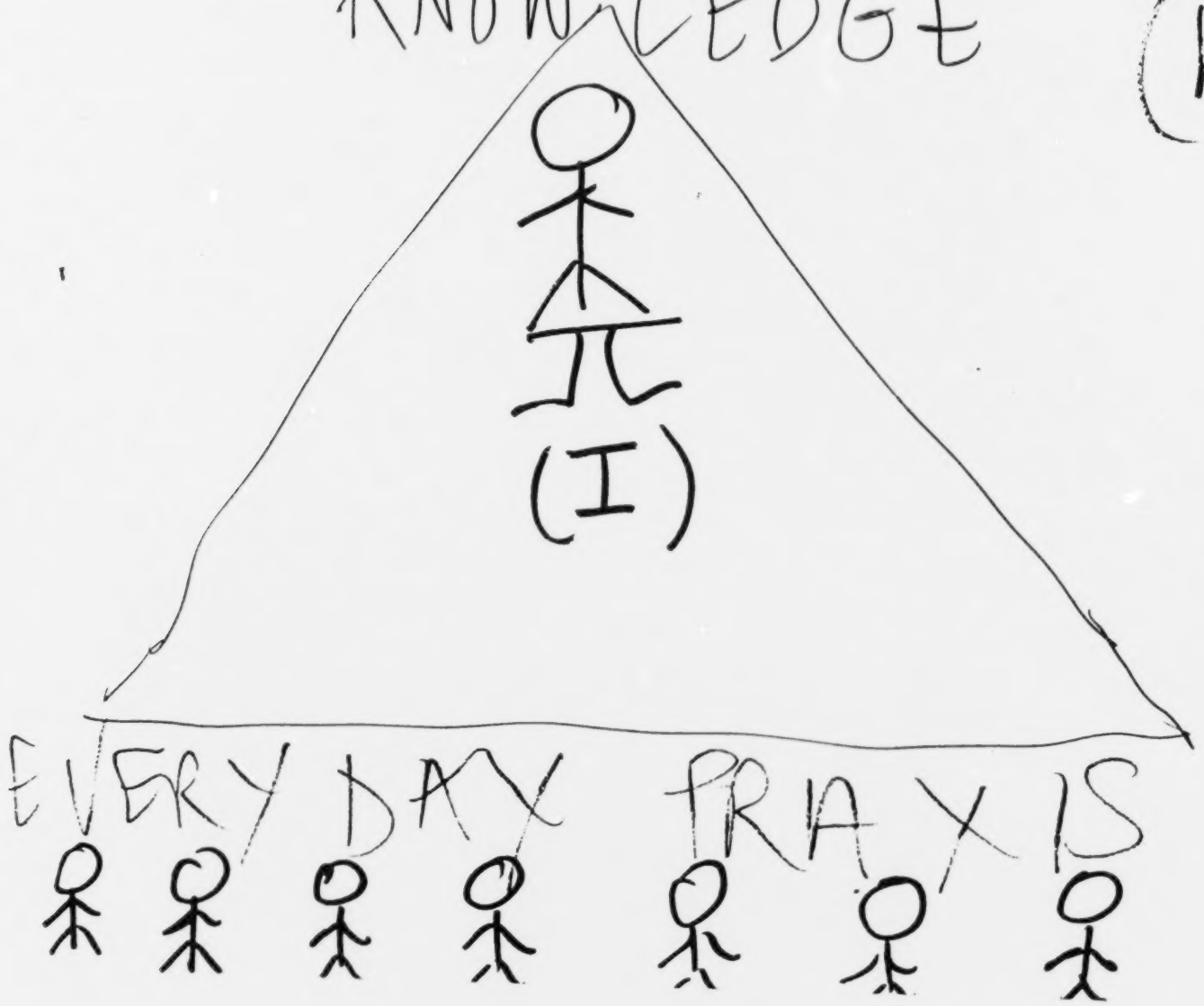


APPENDIX 2

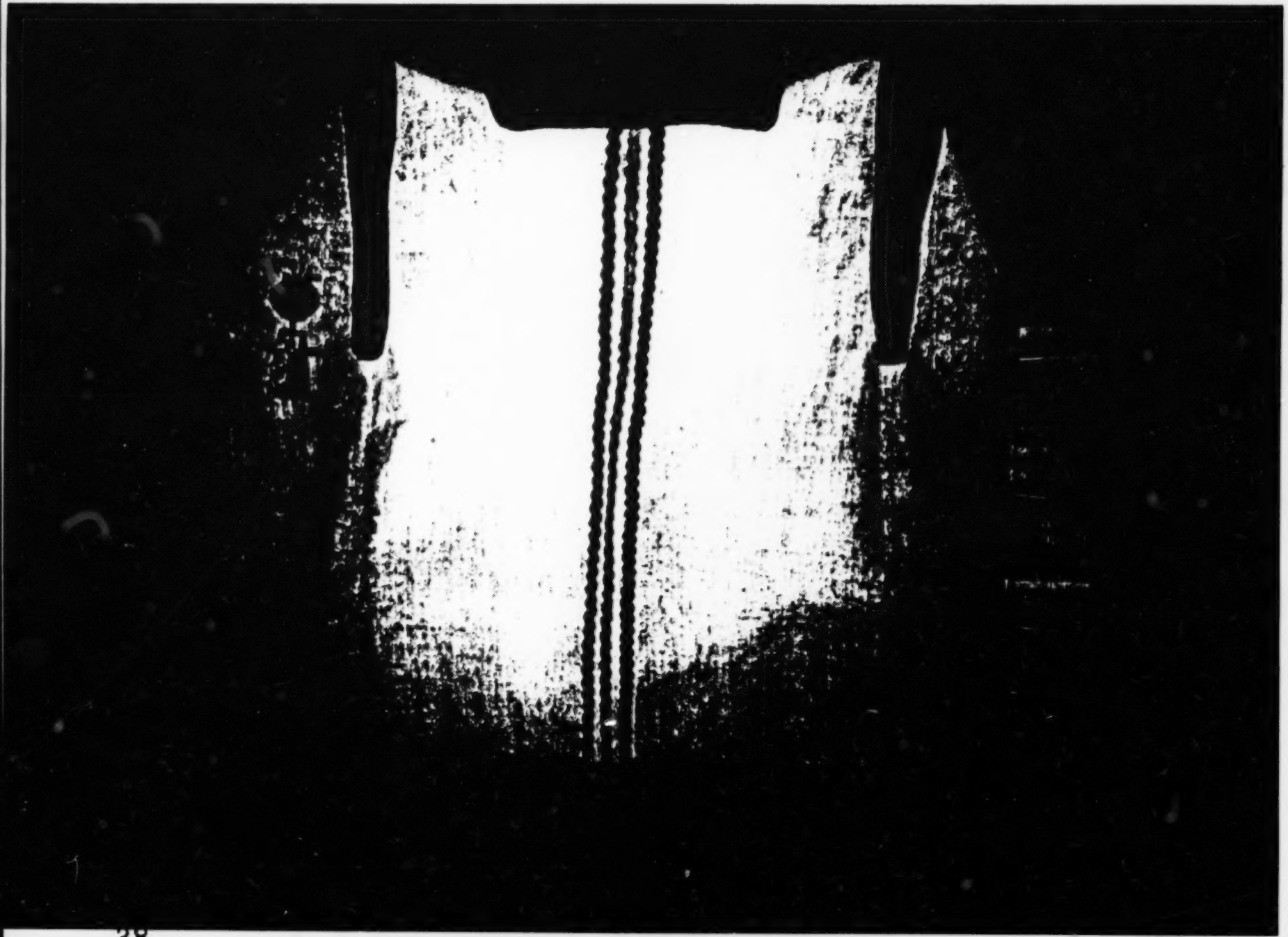

— Meditative Space —

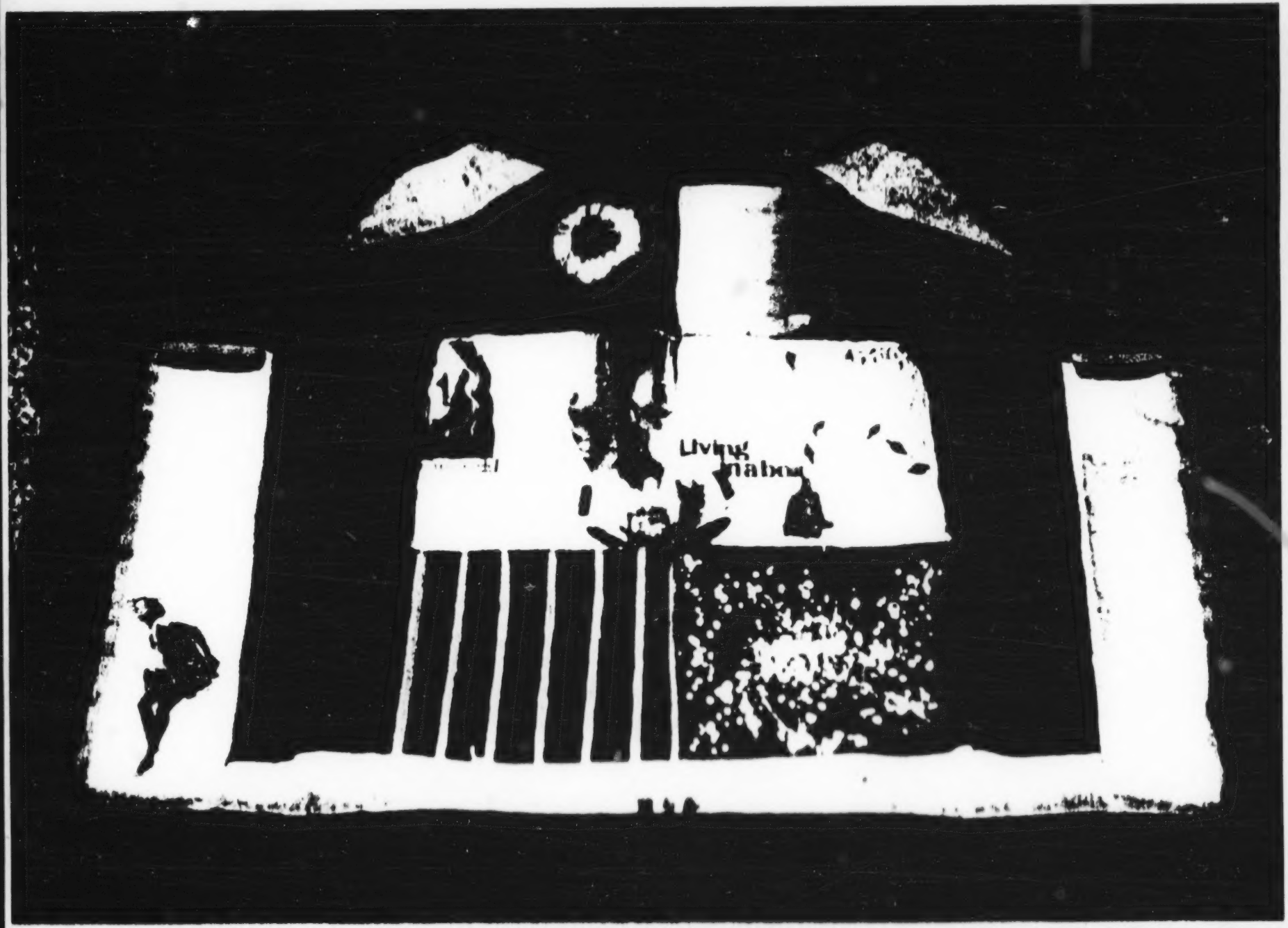


WHAT IS THE ROLE OF (I) IN KNOWLEDGE (NE)?



APPENDIX 3





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